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INTRINSIC DISABILITIES OF ISLAND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

by: Lloyd SEARWAR*

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by

Lloyd Searwar

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INTRINSIC DISABILITIES OF ISLAND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

1. While the international community acting through the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1976 identified Island Developing Countries (IDCs), as a category of countries which required specific attention and assistance, IDCs have not so far secured the measure of international assistance which was required and expected.

2. This lack of adequate assistance may be due to the fact that enough attention has not been given to the grave implications of the intrinsic disabilities to which IDCs are subject. Such disabilities operating as pervasive constraints on the development process of IDCs give to their situation its characteristic precariousness.

I. CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

I.1. Diversity of Islands

3. A conceptual difficulty which may constrain the donor approach to IDCs derives from the heterogeneity of island developing countries. In responding to an inquiry by UNCTAD's Secretary-General in December 1983, the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands remarked:

> generalizations are difficult for a category which comprises micro-states such a Pitcairn (100 inhabitants) and Indonesia (151 million inhabitants).[3]

4. But such great disparity in size of population does not even begin to define the truly heterogeneous character of this category of disadvantaged countries. Of at least equal significance are fundamental differences in physical structure, resource endowment and the factor of dispersion. The diversity of islands reflects their varied geological origin. Doumenge has distinguished between recently formed volcanic islands, old complex islands, volcanic islands with lagoons and coral reefs, atolls and raised atolls[4].

5. Some islands are comparatively large with tracts of land capable of supporting dense population; others are little more than tiny sand cays. The geological formation in each case dictates the development potential. Such fundamental differences occur not only between but within groupings. In the South Pacific, land forms vary from the Fiji and Solomon Islands with rich, large areas of volcanic soils to strings of tiny islets around lagoons which it has been said must be regarded as on the outer limits of land fit for human habitation.

6. The geological base of the Caribbean islands is similarly diversified varying from the volcanic to the calcareous with one island-Guadeloupe-having both types of formation. The physical diversity is matched by that of population, especially in the South Pacific where there are people of Melanesian, Micronesian, Polynesian, South Asian and European extraction.

I.2. The Implications of Dispersion

7. Similarly it is difficult to conceptualize the implications of dispersion and fragmentation which occurs not only within groupings but within countries themselves as is the case with archipelagos. In the Pacific, the island groups are spread over more than ten million square miles of ocean. The constituent islands of the Maldives archipelago are distributed over a distance of 800 kilometres.

I.3. A Common Range of Disabilities

8. It is perhaps such factors as huge variations in size, resource endowment and population, fundamental differences in physical structure, and wide dispersion within and among IDCs, perhaps overlaid by images of blissful tourist "islands in the sun" which impede the full understanding of the special difficulties which IDCs confront. It is nevertheless the case that despite such heterogeneity, all island countries and in particular small island countries confront a range of disabilities, some more so than others, which undermine their capacity to undertake their own development and thus threaten their viability.

9. Viability is a concept capable of being defined in a variety of ways but however defined, it must at least take account of whether the human community involved considers that their interaction with their immediate environment provides them with the capacity to secure acceptable levels of living and security. Island communities for the most part consider that the disabilities that derive from insularity compounded by the constraints of smallness gravely deminish their capacity to provide themselves on a sustainable basis with acceptable levels of living and security. It is on this situation of precariousness that the case is made for specific assistance to overcome the disabilities to which IDCs and in particular SIDCs are subject.

I.4. Smallness and Insularity

10. Somewhat similar conceptual difficulties appear to surround the question of the inter-relationship of smallness and insularity. Thus the Economics and Research Staff Department of the World Bank is quoted by UNCTAD as asserting that:

> there is general agreement that, while country size may impose some special economic characteristics, insularity as such usually is not considered a meaningful category.[5]

11. The difficulties may have come about because the conditions which derive from smallness are so often lumped together with those disabilities which derive from insularity. Thus, the first Non-Aligned Meeting of Representatives on Small Island Developing Countries held in Grenada in September 1983, identified a range of factors as those particularly affecting Small Island Developing Countries, most of which are equally operative in the case of continental small countries.

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12. On the other hand, the UNCTAD Secretariat Report TD/B/1006, of 18 July 1984, on progress in the Implementation of Specific Action Arising from or Related to the Particular Needs and Problems of Island and Land-locked Developing Countries distinguished between the specific characteristics linked to smallness, namely, diseconomies of scale, specialization and openness, and the specific characteristics linked to insularity-remoteness and transport problems, fragility of eco-systems and environment, and proneness to natural disasters.

13. While it is generally agreed that small size does not by itself constitute an impediment to development, it is the case that a range of disabilities peculiar to insularity which occur concurrently with those which flow from smallness interact and operate together to retard or constrain development of the IDC either directly or through the diversion of resources away from positive development.[6]

14. The above mentioned finding of this study does not posit a form of geographical determinism. It relies only on the observed consequences of recurrent phenomena. To take but one example:

(i) It has been established e.g. that IDCs are subject to a high incidence of natural disasters including hurricanes, earthquakes, disease etc., and that such disasters because of the factor of small size wreak in the case of the SIDCs country-wide devastation; and

(ii) that coping with the incidence of such disasters requires disaster preparedness and reconstruction arrangements which draw heavily on the very limited resources of the small island country.resources which would otherwise be available for positive development.

15. In short, such disabilities which derive from insularity deprive island countries of that surplus of resource, energy and spirit needed to embark on effective programmes of development. This may always have been a predicament of the widely dispersed island peoples. Thus, the distinguished historian Arnold Toynbee remarked:

> the Polynesians, for instance, ventured upon the tour de force of audacious oceanic voyaging. Their skill was to perform these stupendous voyages in frail open canoes. Their penalty was to remain, for an unknown but undoubtedly lengthy period of time, in exact equilibrium with the Pacific.just able to cross its vast empty spaces, but never able to cross them with any margin of security or ease.[7]

16. Hence, despite their heroic courage and high skill, the ancient Polynesians were unable to build a complex civilization.

I.5 Per Capita Income

17. There appears to be a number of conceptual difficulties which impede the provision of special assistance to the IDCs. While the other categories of disadvantaged countries (Least Developed & Land-Locked) are for the most part characterized by mass poverty, Island Developing Countries and in particular Small Island Developing Countries (SIDCs), in terms of the usual criteria (to be discussed later) have high per capita incomes [2]. However, it is to be noted that eight island countries have been classified among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), namely, Cape Verde, The Comoros, Maldives, Western Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tuvalu. The more recent classification of Kiribati and Tuvalu as LDCs is of special significance, as it recognizes that a number of atoll countries exist at bare subsistence level.

II. VULNERABILITY

II.1 Dimension of Precariousness

18. The dimension of precariousness which characterizes the SIDC is described in a number of findings which this study has yielded and which are summarized below and are discussed later in this paper in some detail. These are as follows:

(i) insularity as such involves a number of intrinsic disabilities with which the Island Developing Country, and in particular the Small Island Developing Country must cope. (Intrinsic is defined as "belonging naturally" or "inherent". Disability is interpreted to mean, following the Oxford Dictionary, as a thing or event that prevents one from doing something).

(ii) Most Island Developing Countries are small (nearly 70 per cent of them)*.

(iii) While it is agreed that smallness is not a necessary nor sufficient condition for poor development performance, small size and its consequences are major constraints -on the range of options available to meet problems such as backwardness, poverty and remoteness-.[8]

(iv) Small size accentuates insularity and in this sense exacerbates the intrinsic disabilities associated with insularity.

(v) Disabilities operate, either directly or through the diversion or resources required to cope with them, to severely constrain the already limited range of development options open to the Island Developing Country.
(*Small in this study is defined as having a population of less than one million).

(vi) The factors which derive from (a) smallness, and the disabilities which derive from (b) insularity, interact and operate together to create for the SIDC a situation of major disadvantage. Thus the IDC cannot easily attempt to safeguard the agricultural sector of its economy from the ravages of natural disaster (e.g. hurricanes) through diversification as the factors which derive from smallness, namely small land area with consequent lack of climatic and soil variation and the need to specialize as far as possible to secure scale economies, dictate the concentration on one agricultural product.

(vii) Criteria based on GDP per capita which show the SIDCs as among the better off developing countries do not take inter alia account of such matters as economic fragility including lack of structural transformation, resource depletion and the question of credit worthiness.

(viii) In view of their vulnerability ("vulnerability" defined as "open to attack"), the IDCs and especially the SIDCs are in the front line of those states which must cope with a number of emerging global problems, the resolution of which is already acknowledged as the responsibility of the international community.

II.2 Topographic handicaps

19. The most basic physical feature of being an island is also the major source of its vulnerability, namely its coastline. The coastline is a zone of vulnerability for any country whether large or small, developed or underdeveloped. It is particularly so for the SIDCs, which are virtually all coastline. Doumenge has noted: It has also to be borne in mind that an island will always have a long coastline in relation to its surface area. The smaller the surface area, the higher will be coastline/surface area ratio, and it is this ratio that affords a good measure of the degree of insularity. With ratios of only 1 km of coastline to 25 km2 surface area, a degree of continentality begins to be discernible. A ratio of less than 1km per 100 km2 brings us unequivocally into the continental island category. Conversely, insularity becomes clear with a ratio of 1 km or more of coastline per 10 square kilometres.[9]

II.2.1 Problems of erosion and pollution

20. The defence of the coast of the SIDC against destruction or penetration has but little resource to draw on from its tiny hinterland. The coast of the SIDC is subject to pollution from oil leaks and spills, and oil or water discharges from tankers en route to refill, and the improper disposal of domestic and industrial wastes. In addition to the erosion which occurs naturally as a result of wave motion there is that which results from unwise industrial use as, for example, the uncontrolled use of sand in construction leading to the loss of beaches, the death of coral reefs and the destruction of mangroves, sea grass and wetland habitats. A recent diagnostic survey of this problem in Barbados shows that beaches on the island's west coast are disappearing at the rate of 1.5 meters every ten years.[10]

21. Managing the sensitive resources of the coast - in many islands its main resource - requires the utilization of other scarce resources in a national programme of coastal zone management which recognises the interaction of natural and man-made events, and in the promotion of regional schemes of pollution control.

II.2.2 Security implications

22. The coast of the small island with its bays and inlets lends itself to penetration and attack. It is vulnerable to such illicit operations as the drug and arms trade, smuggling and illegal immigration. Moreover, the coast is vulnerable to attack by mercenaries and exile dissident groups. Several of the Indian Ocean States, the Republic of Maldives, Seychelles and the Comoros, have been subject to mercenary attack. Unsuccessful mercenary attacks have been mounted against a number of Caribbean States.

23. Island communities have perceived such vulnerability to penetration and attacks as deriving in major part from their physical lay-out as small islands, although clearly location is also a determining factor. In this connection, Dr. Vaughan Lewis, Director-General of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has pointed out:

> an awareness quickly developed, particularly among the Governments of the small Eastern Caribbean States, that the capabilities left to them by the United Kingdom for maintaining internal and external security, including the protection of the numerous bays and inlets that characterize these States, were minimal; the lack of such capabilities left the political systems vulnerable to attacks or manipulation by small but well-equipped groups. [11]

24. In consequence, the OECS States have established, together with the island of Barbados, a defence treaty which provides, inter alia, for mutual assistance in such areas as prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration, customs and excise control, protection of offshore installations, pollution control and threats to national security. Such defence arrangements, which are deemed imperative in view of the vulnerabilities which derive from island topography, constitute in the case of this island grouping a major diversion of resources away from main-stream development.

II.2.3 Tendency towards Secession

25. A major problem in multi-island states is the tendency for political aspirations or dissent in the outer island to be articulated in terms of secession. Such secessionist movements are undoubtedly rooted in the sense of separateness which characterizes the group feeling in an island other than that in which the capital city and ruling elite are based. The sense of separateness is strengthened by the perception of:

situations of real or assumed deprivation, within an economic context of general scarcity or inequitable distribution of resources. The primacy of concern devoted by the colonial powers to the more populated islands in any grouping; the partly fortuitous circumstances that the majority support for the ruling elites has tended to come from the major island in any group rather than being more evenly spread over the grouping; and the consequent isolation of opposition groupings within clearly demarcated geographical zones-all of these factors have tended to focus hostility, with the departure of the colonial power-on the ruling indigenous political elite. This elite, more often than not, does not feel itself possessed of sufficient resources to right, in one grand financial endeavour, the historical deprivation of the offshore islands. [12]

26. It may be that the sense of separateness also derives from the fact that the colonial culture which permeated the major island was diffused more thinly in the outer islands.

27. In the Caribbean the island of Anguilla has seceded from the multi-island country, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla. In December 1979 an uprising occurred on Union Island in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. There was at one stage secessionist tendencies in Barbuda, the outer island to Antigua. Trinidad has experienced political difficulties with its sister island of Tobago. In the Dutch Antilles, Aruba has chosen a separate path to independence. There have likewise been secessionist tendencies in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific island groupings as, for example, the secession of Mayotte on the independence of the Comoros and the secessionist movement in Espiritu Santo in the state of Vanuatu, formally New Hebrides. Similarly, the American trust territories have become separate units through a process of disintegration of political links.

28. In the Caribbean, efforts have been made to maintain the political unity of the multi-island countries through constitutional and other mechanisms which constitute a major strain on resources including skilled personnel. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in the case of the two tiny islands of St. Kitts and Nevis which together have established a federal state with Nevis having its own Governor, Prime Minister and Parliament.

II.2.4 Pecularities of archipelagos

29. The archipelagos, the dominant form among island developing countries have, in addition to those disabilities characteristic of other IDCs, a special range of disabilities. The following authoritative descriptions of three of the larger archipelagic countries make this point:

(i) Fiji is a small, open island economy. Its total land area is 18,000 km2. Although there are some 300 islands in the group, only 100 are inhabited. Most of the inhabited islands are quite small and the two main islands of the group account for about 90 per cent of the land area and population. The relatively small area is, however, surrounded by a vast territorial sea. The fragmentation of the islands creates its special problems in terms of transportation, communication and administration.[13]

(ii) The Bahamas

30. There are over 700 islands and innumerable cays comprising the Archipelago of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. Permanent populations exist on less than thirty islands. Interspersed as The Bahamas Islands are by marine spaces, and given the priorities incumbent upon Government for the provision of at least adequate services inclusive of National Health, Education, Social Security and other necessities of Welfare, the expenditure for defence-from a limited budget-to combat threats to national security might not be accorded a priority consideration. There then exists the difficulty of addressing these problems in satisfactory nationalist forms.[14]

(iii) Maldives

31. The population of the Maldives is less than 200,000 and is unevenly spread over 202 islands. The islands stretch over 500 miles of land and to travel from the north end to the southern end of the archipelago takes about 5 to 6 days by boat with night stops because during the night you cannot travel through the archipelago. If there are any emergencies, the cost of transportation, of administering any programme, is very high. We had an outbreak of an epidemic in 1978 and some of the medical teams were stranded, unable to travel to the next island for more than two weeks, because of the bad weather conditions. There are some of the elements that must be taken into account when talking about technical assistance. There are physical constraints and geographical constraints.

32. The centre of the country economic activities is situated almost in the centre of the archipelago, on the capital island, which is just about 3 square miles and on which over 45,000 people and most of the country's facilities are concentrated. Although the Government and the donor agencies may want to emphasize the process of decentralization and fairer distribution of services and so on, these realities also play a major role. To give an example, a report made recently by the World Bank economic mission discussed the type of projects and the policies which should be applied in our development plans. It criticized the fact that there is too great a concentration of services and benefits in the central zone. However, we think it is quite a natural thing to happen because the airport is in the centre and we can't move it far away because the airport is there.[15]

33. A range of difficult problems thus derives from the physical configuration of an archipelago including those briefly outlined below:

(i) In the case of the archipelago the problem of remoteness or geographical dispersion occurs not only in relation to developed countries but within the archipelago country itself. It has been noted that distances to be travelled within some archipelagic countries may represent an even greater remoteness in terms of travel time than that between the capital and neighbouring countries. In consequence, development projects have to be formulated to take account of a very high internal transport cost component and the induced migration of tiny communities from far distant unit islands to more centrally-located islands.

(ii) A large proportion of incomes is required to finance and maintain minimum social and economic infrastructure which because of small population thus has very high per capita costs. The archipelago of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has found it necessary to provide itself with a number of small airports each, little more than a landing facility. In Tuvalu in the South Pacific, four doctors must travel continuously through some nine islands serving a small population (9000) divided into tiny communities.

(iii) Development strategy has to be reconceived in terms of the archipelagic circumstances, as for example:

(a) even when there is little economic justification, growth poles as e.g. ports must be established to counteract the process of too great polarisation.

(b) in view of land fragmentation there is often a scarcity of appropriate sites for industry and too limited recruiting areas for labour. Internal distances likewise diminish the market for final goods and services.

(c) proposals for self-sufficiency in food production may have little relevance. With tiny land areas in widely dispersed islands and rapidly growing population there is pressure on land for housing, public buildings and other facilities. In consequence there is as, for example, in Tuvalu little available land for increased agricultural production with consequent increased demand for food imports.

(iv) There are difficult problems in maintaining national integration.

(v) In addition to such development and institution building problems there is the question of security. Remote outer islands may become way-stations for arms and drug-smuggling. With limited security infrastructure it is nearly impossible for the archipelago country to control or prevent such incursions.

(vi) In one region, namely, the Pacific Ocean, nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear waste impact, in view of geographic dispersion, within the archipelagic country itself.

II.2.5 Fragility of atolls

34. Atoll countries are made up for the most part of a series of small islets composed of coral, sand and rock, devoid of any topsoil. A reef encloses, sometimes entirely, a lagoon. Like archipelagos the atoll developing country has a special range of disabilities in addition to those encountered in other IDCs.

35. Such soil as there is, is subject to erosion and reclamation poses difficult problems. Rainfall is variable and inadequate and there is no natural surface storage of water as there are no fresh water ponds, lakes or streams. Such few crops as can be grown, sweet potatoes and a few vegetables, provide a fragile basis for eking out a semi-subsistence economy. The lagoon itself which is often a rich source of fish is under constant threat of pollution. The only significant trade is in the by-products of the coconut palm.

36. Because of their very small size and wide dispersion (the atoll country of Kiribati with population of 69,000 and land area of 728 square kilometres stretches a distance equal to that between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the USA). These atoll countries confront almost insoluble problems of transportation and supply and communication. Such problems are compounded by a rapidly growing population with widening aspirations. Some more fortunate atolls can become catchment areas for guano leading in time to the formation of valuable phosphate deposits. The Republic of Nauru has developed a lucrative mining industry on the basis of such deposits. However, those deposits are not extensive and soon come to an end as has happened in Kiribati which suddenly found its GDP reduced by half. Moreover, excavation makes significant areas uninhabitable. In addition such extraordinary access to wealth while leading to infrastructural development may have undesirable social and economic consequences.

37. Some recent studies have predicted that many low lying coral atoll islands could become completely submerged over the next fifty years if present trends in sea level rise continue.[12] Sea level rise already poses difficult problems from atoll countries, threatening the life of the community and agriculture. It increases the intrusion of salt water into surface and ground water systems. In southern Kiribati and Tuvalu saline intrusion has already damaged irreplaceable fresh water wells.

II.2.6 Remoteness

38. The attention given to disabilities which derive from location is in the main focussed on the factor of remoteness from the markets of developed countries, distance from established sea routes, and lack of access to transport networks. Most island developing countries are more than 500 kilometres from the nearest continent. Technological advances in transport, including the development of the container-cellular vessel, the bulk carrier and the jumbo jet, have tended to accentuate the factor of remoteness by concentrating transport networks on the larger countries which can provide the required terminals or jet runways which connect with land-based transportation systems. In consequence, remote IDCs must increasingly provide, either individually or regionally, their own feeder services with heavy dependence on obsolete but expensive coastal ships.

39. The dispersed nature of these countries likewise poses communication problems which can only be solved by the latest and expensive technology, namely, satellite links which provide not only for broadcasting but for point-to-point communication.

II.2.7 Hazards of Favourable Location

40. Remoteness is only one dimension of location. Location can increase or diminish the operation of the disabilities which derive from insularity. Thus, location near to metropolitan centres may attract undesirable access through cays or inlets or to outer islands for illegal purposes, as already noted. On the other hand, isolation may enhance security.

41. Favourable location may also diminish some of the negative aspects of insularity by enabling the promotion of a lucrative tourist industry. However, near total dependence of the IDC on a tourist industry with an annual intake of a volume of tourists which so often exceeds the population of the IDC, and the consequent unplanned inculcation of foreign tastes and life-styles, has led to the erosion of institutions and of traditional values and identity with the consequent denial to the IDC of the capacity to choose options leading to other more acceptable forms of development.

42. While the tourist industry on which so many SIDCs are increasingly dependent has proved to be remarkably resistant to the effects of economic change in the developed countries or turbulence in the tourist destination, it may prove vulnerable to climatic change such as high frequency in hurricanes or unseasonable weather leading to the search for new resorts.16

43. More serious in its implications is a location which is perceived by major powers as capable of providing links in strategic networks. While the provision of bases within such networks, as already noted, may lead to benefits, it can also pose difficult problems for the IDC. Diego Garcia remains the dramatic example of the disabilities which may flow from strategic location. Its population numbering some 1000 was removed to Mauritius and neighbouring islands, and the island leased to the United States of America (USA) as a base. The French Government has deployed a force on Mayotte (formerly one of the Comoros) and utilizes the island for its strategic presence in the Indian Ocean. Another example of the strategic interest in small islands was the reported offer at one time of the USSR to lease the island of Gan in the Maldives.

II.2.8 Vulnerability of eco-systems

44. IDCs, and in particular small island developing countries, provide sanctuaries for life forms which, except for the isolation provided by the island environment, might have perished from the planet through destruction by pests, diseases and the effects of human habitation. Such rare and fragile eco-systems which are part of the genetic resources of mankind exist in particular on the coasts of islands where they are subject to a variety of hazards, some internal, others external in origin. Internally, the pressure towards development especially in the fields of tourism and agriculture lead to the unplanned utilization of the coastal zone including beaches, wetlands and mangrove swamps and to the intensive use of fertilizer and pesticides.all of which threaten and destroy eco-systems. Externally, islands are increasingly under pressure to provide sites for waste disposal, deep-water transhipment centres, cruise ship ports and a range of so-called off-shore activities which impact adversely on the environment.[18]

45. Eco-systems of islands are also subject to destruction by hurricanes and other natural disasters and may be adversely affected by sea-level rise. The particular nature of the fragility of eco-systems and of how they might be protected through planned measures which take account of the imperative need for development as, for example, beach utilization for tourism, is an unexplored and largely unresearched area. Planning is of particular importance as it has been pointed out that eco-systems are interlinked and that damage to one could have reverberating effects on other eco-systems; for example, the removal of forest cover leading to the washing down of soil deposits can have effects on eco-systems in coastal and estuarine areas.

46. The difficulties and the need for the considerable resources required for the protection of eco-systems are such that they are likely to be given low priority in the pressure to provide higher levels of living. The preservation of the sanctuaries for these unexplored genetic resources of mankind thus requires special international assistance.

II.3. Acquired vulnerability

47. It is considered that there is a range of disabilities which have been acquired through historical circumstances (or, in the case of the EEZ, through recent international law-making) but which, because they have been in operation for such a long time, should be considered as virtually inherent.

II.3.1 Isolation

48. Isolation with a region consisting of other similar island countries derives from the period of European expansion which began some five centuries ago and which was originally concentrated on the occupation of islands, as the continental hinterlands could at that time only be penetrated with difficulty. In consequence, such islands were integrated linguistically, culturally and economically into European systems and were developed as plantation economies geared exclusively to the production of one or two products for overseas markets. These links persist despite the achievement of independence by a majority of island countries.

49. This imbedding in the European system has not been without benefits. However, it has led in practice to the isolation of such island countries from regional neighbours including other island countries. Nowhere is this situation more clearly seen than in the Caribbean. Language, culture, institutional pattern, and economic links, have conditioned the Caribbean island countries to look North for markets or sources of assistance and for their social or economic models rather than to other neighbouring island countries or to the countries of the Caribbean littoral. Existing trade and economic links and the infrastructure of transport and communications which reflect the pattern of colonial rule thus serve as barriers to the expansion of trade within the Region.

50. It is now generally agreed that although the former linkages have been ameliorated and improved through such schemes as the Lome Conventions (with the EEC), the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) (with the USA) and CARIBCAN (with Canada), the steps towards the necessary structural transformation of the island economies of the Caribbean, at a time when the traditional industries have lost their growth dynamic, must include, as one important element, economic co-operation with other developing countries in the Region. However, such economic co-operation which must inevitably include a political dimension is now significantly impeded by the acquired differences among island countries which persist from the colonial past.

II.3.2 Migration

51. Edward Donmen has remarked: the root cause of migration is in general the attraction of the goods which money can by, and for a young person the freedom from responsibilities of membership in a cohesive social group, rather than the stark pressure of overpopulation.[22]

52. Certainly there is a tradition of out-migration from islands which is more regular and less explicable in economic terms than the periodic movement of jobless workers to new centres of economic activity (a subject which has already been addressed). Such migrants are usually the better skilled and better paid workers. The motivation to migrate probably responds to the feelings of closeness in island societies. Dawn Marshall has stated:

small island States, as a consequence of their small physical size, have certain characteristics which, if they do not actually encourage, certainly provide motives for out-migration. The possibilities and opportunities for development both individual and national are limited in small island states. Small physical size limits resource endowment both in terms, and of the quantity, of any one resource and in terms of the variety of resource available. And limited resources clearly limit both the type of economic activities and the quantity and variety of these economic activities.[23]

53. In addition there is the sense of rootlessness among the descendants of transplanted peoples which form the population of at least half of the island developing countries.[24] Moreover, the characteristic high import content of the island economy promotes an imported cultural model which encourages migration.

54. While such internal influences are among the push factors, there is undoubtedly the powerful attraction of the metropolitan way of life to which island peoples are responsive because of comparatively high urbanization through their long association with the said metropoles and of the more recent penetration of their societies by electronic media.

55. The Pacific provides several examples of the effects of out-migration which are duplicated in the case of other SIDCs. In Western Samoa the natural rate of increase of 3 per cent has been completely nullified by out-migration. Through emigration mainly to New Zealand, the population of Niue dropped over a three-year period from 5,000 in 1971 to about 4,000. In the case of the Caribbean island of Montserrat, it has been reported that the bulk of its population now lives overseas.

56. Whatever might be the roots of the propensity to out-migration, it constitutes a major disability as it deprives island countries precisely of those individuals whose capacity to innovate holds the key to development within a situation of constraints. Such major disadvantage is to some extent mitigated by the volume of remittances which can form a significant foreign exchange contribution to the economy, as is shown in the case of the few IDCs, e.g. Tonga and Antigua and Barbuda for which data is available.[25] However, it has been argued that remittances can also have significant negative impact on the economy including the abandonment of low status labour such as farming, the fostering of conspicuous consumption including the consumption of imported food, investment in marginally productive enterprises such as rumshops, taxis and boutiques and the further promotion of the migration mentality.[26]

II.3.3 Lack of Cohesiveness

57. At least half of all island developing countries have populations which are predominantly non-indigenous, the result of the transplanting of labour through the systems of slavery or indenture for work on colonial plantations. In several island countries the resulting cultural and social fragmentation weakens institutions and jeopardizes economic development especially at times of stress and austerity. In such circumstances the prolonged search for accommodation and agreement, sometimes involving violence, can disable the island country from undertaking those programmes of development which would provide higher levels of living.

II.3.4 Implications of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)

58. The Law of the Seas Convention in establishing the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has in theory provided small island countries with the potential to transform their development options. As the Commonwealth Report "Vulnerability" has remarked:

what previously was a small, poorly endowed and already overexploited terrain, could become a platform controlling a vast aquatory rich in underexploited, often even unexplored resources.[27]

59. However, the EEZ in practice holds out little immediate prospect for development. It is the case that the EEZs of most IDCs are not rich fishing grounds. Moreover, where there are fishing possibilities mainly in the deep waters, exploitation must be on a scale beyond the resources of the IDC. The exploitation of non-living marine resources is likewise much beyond the resources of even the more developed IDCs. The immediate result of the acquisition of the EEZ has been to add to the SIDC's disabilities in a number of ways:

(i) efforts to demarcate the EEZ have led to numerous boundary disputes; in the case of some IDCs (the archipelagos) application of delimitation criteria has proven so difficult that they are now apparently unable to ratify the convention;

(ii) island security has been significantly diminished in the absence of the capacity to manage and police the resource, against destructive fishing practices, poaching and other incursions into the EEZ;

(iii) control over vast ocean spaces which may contain valuable resources appears to be pushing islands into centre stage in the struggle for the control of such spaces including strategic waterways.

60. On the other hand the recognition by the Convention of the concept of the archipelagic state by providing a measure of control over what was hitherto considered the high seas may strengthen the cohesion of some multi-island small countries.

II.4. Limited resource endowment

61. The natural resources of the small island developing country are characterized not only by scarcity (deriving from smallness) or inadequacy (deriving from geological formation), but by their extreme vulnerability. The inadequacy of water supplies remains a continual threat to the island community. Few islands possess rivers or creeks or lakes. Wells are subject to the intrusion of salt water and there is the ever-present threat of pollution.

In the case of the atoll, their lenses of fresh water are easily depleted or contaminated by the sea. The development of industry or tourism soon brings with it unbearable demands on already inadequate and fragile fresh water supplies.

62. Land use is subject to such major problems as erosion and the inroad of toxicity. In some islands the soil of fertile hillsides is swept into the sea because of deforestation. Moreover, island tradition may insist on the continual division of already small parcels of land, making it impossible for rational land use.

63. Except for wood and charcoal there is (except in the case of some very few SIDCs) no indigenous source of energy. The exclusive dependence on wood and charcoal rapidly leads to deforestation, thus removing the forest cover which is critical for small islands.

64. In view of such problems of scarcity and vulnerability, the SIDC, if it is to essay a higher level of living, must establish expensive support mechanisms in place of the natural systems with which continental countries are endowed. Such special mechanisms as e.g. expensive desalination plant and land use management and waste disposal systems demand heavy allocations of scarce funds and personnel.

II.5 Incidence of natural disasters

65. The high incidence of natural disasters in island-developing countries is a matter of record. In April 1979, in the Caribbean, just prior to the independence of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Soufriere Volcano erupted causing enormous material damage to that country, though with little loss of life. In the same year Hurricanes David and Frederick cut a swath of destruction through the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, destroying banana cultivation, citrus, coconuts and already inadequate economic infrastructure. In Dominica, the hurricanes left 60,000 homeless out of a total population of 80,000. 1980 saw renewed suffering in Dominica with the destruction of the banana cultivation by Hurricane Allen. Bananas in Dominica account for 60 per cent of foreign exchange earnings and are grown by 11,000 of the total farming population of 14,000.

66. Sugar, which represents 60 per cent of export earnings for St Kitts/Nevis employing some 31 per cent of the labour force, was almost totally destroyed by smut disease in 1981; 85 per cent replanting was required.
The Caribbean experience is paralleled in other island regions. In the Pacific, in 1983 and 1985, cyclones followed by prolonged drought damaged sugar and other crops in Fiji. Sugar output fell by about 43 per cent. Tourist arrivals were also affected because of damage to hotels. Earlier, in 1972, Hurricane Bebe left over one-fifth of Fiji's population homeless and destroyed 95 percent of the housing on the main island of Tuvalu.

67. Hurricane Isaac in 1982 destroyed over 50 percent of the housing in Tonga and 90 per cent of its banana crop. In 1961 the entire population of Tristan da Cunha had to be evacuated because of volcanic eruption. In 1940 the citrus industry of Rodrigues, a constituent island of Mauritius, was wiped out by an "imported" disease. Such statistics clearly indicate the enormous destruction which natural disasters wreak on SIDCs.

68. While disasters on a larger scale occur in continental countries, in the case of the IDC the effects are pervasive and totally devastating. Disasters destroy already fragile infrastructure including inadequate hospitals, poor housing, and limited communication network. The productive sectors including the "foreign" exchange earning sector are virtually eliminated. In the case of the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia, the Hurricane Allen reduced its GNP by 89 per cent in one night.

69. It has been remarked that while larger countries can instantaneously spread the cost over the population, small countries have no choice but to spread it over time. In consequence, the need for disaster planning, mitigation measures including building design and location of settlement and reconstruction programmes touching nearly every area of island life involves a vast diversion of resources both in funds and personnel from "mainstream" development.

70. The experience of IDCs demonstrates that while the scale of disaster relief provided by donors is likely to be very high especially where political or strategic factors are involved, there is altogether less enthusiasm for the support of mitigation measures as components in reconstruction. The IDC authorities confronted by the task of reconstruction and under pressure from its people to provide immediate relief are likely to be influenced by such other considerations as speed and quantity with consequent enhanced future vulnerability.

71. While it has been estimated that the mitigation cost factor is likely to be of the order of no more than 10 per cent of total costs without donor interest and assistance, it is unlikely that hazards assessment and mitigation factors will be routinely included in national development strategies including the development of the foreign sector. Yet a study of costs and benefits clearly point to the economy of building into new development projects mitigation measures.

II.6 Global hazards

II.6.1 General

72. In recent years the situation of the IDCs has worsened immeasurably. Because of the disabilities to which they are subject as islands, compounded in the case of the majority of island countries by the additional constraints which derive from smallness, these countries are today particularly vulnerable to the hazards and risks of those global problems which threaten fundamentally the welfare of the human community in these last years of the twentieth century.

73. The effects of global warming, problems of waste disposal including the growing practice of dumping in the oceans, the destruction of eco-systems which hold the precious heritage of genetic diversity, the often wanton exploitation of the resources of the sea and strategic conflict and competition all these issues and situations impact on the precarious condition of the IDCs which because of their vulnerabilities and small size thus find themselves in the front line of mankind's struggle to maintain a habitable planet.

74. Whatever might be the causes of the greenhouse effect, it seems certain that even a slight increase in the sea surface temperature is having a multiple effect on the frequency and force of hurricanes and typhoons.1 We may already be witnessing the effects of this development. In the Pacific in January 1988, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, the Marshall Islands and Guam were hit by cyclones, with every house being destroyed in some islands of Vanuatu.

75. In the Caribbean, the island of Jamaica was devastated in 1988 and in the following year (1989) eleven island countries of the Caribbean suffered immense damage, with the island of Montserrat being massively destroyed. Similarly the increase in the global temperature, with the predicted melting of the Antarctic ice cap and consequent sea level rise, will threaten still further the precarious existence of island communities as for example, in the Maldives and in the South Pacific where there is growing concern with the question of possible resettlement. Islands once played a key role as the staging areas during the period of imperial expansion. At present because of the openness which derives from their physical layout and their location, some island countries are being conscripted into playing the role of way stations in the global network for drug trafficking.

76. With the disposal of toxic and non-bio-degradable wastes posing rapidly mounting problems for the countries of high industrialization, small and remote islands are being seduced into providing dumping grounds. In the case of archipelagos, nuclear testing and oceanic dumping because of the factor of wide dispersion impacts directly within the countries, destroying beaches and life-support systems. Indeed while there is legitimate international concern with the maintenance of such sectors of mankind's heritage as the Amazon forests, little attention is given to the destruction by the incidental risks of industrial growth such as oil spills and ships' discharges of the coastal eco-systems of islands, a small but nevertheless rich source of biological diversity.

77. While the Law of the Seas Convention is recognized as a major advance in the search for consensus on planetary issues, it has, while providing island countries with an important potential for development through the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), at the same time added a new dimension of insecurity to their existence by involving them in conflict and competition on the questions of demarcation, access to and the surveillance of and the management of the marine resource.

78. In a global context still characterized by military competition, island developing countries are likewise enmeshed in situations of hazard which derive from their involvement in strategic networks as bases or communication links. While such utilization has provided benefits it has constrained choice in development strategy and has on occasion thwarted self-determination.

79. In short IDCs, because of their intrinsic disabilities, now find themselves as the new front line states. in a range of global problems which are recognized as the responsibility of the international community and as requiring an international response, but which has so far brought them little special assistance.

II.6.2 Sea level rise

80. The grave implications of sea-level rise are still to find a place on the agenda of major global concerns. While it threatens coastal lowlands everywhere it is in the case of several island countries.namely, the Maldives, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tokelau, the Cocos and Keeling islands, the Northern Cook islands, some islands of Tonga and others - which have recently been studied by the Commonwealth Group of Experts on Climate Change, a matter of survival. The Group summarised its findings as follows:

these islands arouse concern on several grounds. First, their very low elevation means that their whole future could be endangered by sea level rise. Second, even a small increase in sea level could result in proportionately large land losses since typically their circumference is very large in relation to their existing land area. Third, many of these small island states are already highly vulnerable to natural disasters and that vulnerability could be increased.[17]

81. Coping with sea-level rise will require of affected island countries major programmes of planning and preparation including detailed monitoring and survey, the establishment of warning and information systems, assistance with construction, including refuge construction, protection and the conservation of natural protective features. There will also be need for planned migration. However, it seems clear that without a broad commitment at the international level this newest threat to the existence of many IDCs is, because of its gradualist nature, unlikely to secure the assistance of donors.

II.7 Constraints of size

82. This study turns now to the question of the constraints which smallness imposes upon Island Developing Countries. While the study has disengaged for purposes of analysis the disabilities which derive from insularity from the effects of smallness so as to identify more precisely the dimensions of the precariousness which characterizes the viability of IDCs, one notes in passing that in an important sense smallness can be considered an inherent characteristic of the IDC. The point has been forcefully made in the document entitled "Programme of Action for Small Island Developing Countries" which was endorsed by Caricom Ministers for Foreign Affairs and circulated to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in October 1988, as follows:

83. It is instructive to note that most small developing countries are islands. There are 78 countries or territories with populations of one million or under, and of these more than 70 are developing. Thus, most of the small countries are developing countries and most of the small developing countries are islands. Further, of the 69 IDCs listed by UNCTAD, 59 had populations of less than one million in 1981. In respect of land area, 62 of the 69 have land areas of less than 20,000 square kilometres and 44 of them less than 1000 square kilometres. When, therefore, one is discussing small IDCs, one is also discussing small developing countries but with additional characteristics peculiar to their island nature.[28]

84. It is the main point of this paper that in the case of the IDC disabilities intrinsic to insularity operate to add a further dimension of constraints to those imposed by small size on the choice of development options.

II.7.1 Main charcteristics of smallness

85. It is generally agreed that the main characteristics of smallness as such are identified inter alia as follows:

(i) small land area with limited or negligible resource endowment;

(ii) small population with a consequent narrow range of trained manpower;

(iii) diseconomies of scale, leading to high per capita costs of infrastructure and services, owing to indivisibilities;

(iv) dependence on a very narrow range of products or a single export product with consequent vulnerability to external shocks and cylical fluctuation in the world economy.

86. It can be shown that the abovementioned main characteristics which flow from smallness and which apply to many non-island developing countries operate in the case of the IDC to nullify or pre-empt the choice of development options which might otherwise be invoked to cope with the disabilities that derive from insularity. The reverse is also true.

87. Thus the concentration on one agricultural product makes the SIDC especially vulnerable to the devastation of natural phenomena such as hurricanes, cyclones or pests or plant disease. On the other hand, as already noted, SIDC cannot easily safeguard the agricultural sector of its economy through diversification as the factors which derive from smallness, namely small land area with lack of climatic and soil variation and the need to specialize to secure possible scale economies, dictate the concentration on one agricultural product.

88. Indeed any programme for diversification to counter the vulnerabilities intrinsic to insularity will be impeded by the very narrow range of resources available because of smallness and the imperative need of the small economy to specialise.

89. The high commodity dependence on one or two primary products as a result of small size has led where location permits, to increased reliance on tourism and off-shore activities. At the same time such activities increase hazards to which the SIDC is peculiarly susceptible.namely, coastal, including beach destruction, threat to eco-systems and the penetration and erosion of values.

90. The option for innovation to escape the constraints of smallness through education and manpower training is itself constrained through the island population propensity for migration. Similarly, the susceptibilities to shocks which derive from turbulence in the international economy a result of the dependence characteristic of smallness, cannot be cushioned as the already fragile island economy must divert resources to cope with the need to prepare for natural disasters, hurricanes, typhoons, drought, pests and disease.

91. Remoteness, a characteristic disability of insularity (most island countries are at least 200 to 1000 km distant from the nearest continent) tends to accentuate the structural deficiency associated with smallness. Thus the inadequate infrastructure which characterizes smallness cannot in the case of the IDC be supplemented, as is the case with the continental small country, by "hitching a ride" on elements of the infrastructure of a bordering more developed country (each island finds it necessary e.g. to have its own airport). Moreover, population of a size in a small continental country which could support a reasonably adequate infrastructure cannot do so in a multi-island or archipelagic country because of population fragmentation.

92. The list of situations outlined above are to be taken as suggestive rather than comprehensive. However, the main point is that the constraints which derive from size operate in the case of the IDC within a further limiting framework of disabilities which derive from insularity. Together these factors interacting diminish the range of options for development open to the SIDC. The overall effect gives to the economy of the SIDC its pervasive fragility.

II.7.2 Small size enhance insularity

93. First one notes that the size factor itself tends to enhance or diminish the characteristics of insularity. This is a point which has been made definitively by Doumenge:

true insularity only exists, where the emergence is entirely exposed to the influence of the sea. "True" islands are primarily areas of land which have emerged at a sufficient distance from the continent to escape its direct influence, in terms of physical as well as human and economic factors. Emergences of less than 10,000 square kilometres in area are too small to give rise to phenomena unrelated to the influence of the ocean; these are true islands. With an area in excess of 50,000 square kilometres on the other hand, the mass of the island itself will generate its own reactions which places it in the category of continental islands. Between these two limits are "large areas of land" which become progressively less insular as their surface area, and in particular their above-surface volume, increases.[29]

94. Thus not only do the disabilities of insularity occur concurrently with the problems which derive from smallness; small size and insularity interact and reinforce each other in ways which increase vulnerabilities as is discussed below.

95. One might begin by accepting the finding of T.N. Srinivasan that:

smallness obviously is not a necessary nor sufficient condition for poor development performance.[30]

96. On the other hand, the Experts who first reported on Island Developing Countries some 25 years ago were surely right in maintaining that while there is little evidence that small countries are in general any poorer than large ones, that they have a slower rate of growth, or that their people suffer from overall net disadvantages - the small size of a country and its consequences may be major constraint on the range of options available to meet problems such as backwardness, poverty and remoteness.[31]

97. And Percy Selwyn who quotes the passage given above, adds: thus we may consider small size as a disadvantage in operational, even if not in absolute, terms.[32]

II.8 Impact on economic performance

98. As Ramphal has pointed out:

it is because little or no account is taken of the considerations outlined above which dictate the essential fragility and precariousness of the situation of the IDC that per capita income criteria are invoked to determine the eligibility of the SIDC for concessional assistance.

99. These income levels mask real limitations and impediments to development arising from disadvantages of scale, vulnerability and lack of economic diversity. Small states, for instance, are more sensitive to adverse external economic trends even at relatively high levels of development, making self-sustaining growth more difficult to achieve.[33]

100. Per capita income is clearly not a reliable proxy of real development. Consideration should be given to other measurements of development and welfare including such matters as level of employment and income distribution, the state of the social infrastructure, the possible disamenities of current development, the depletion of resources, the diversion of resources to negative development and the international environment in which the SIDC currently finds itself.

101. The SIDC must now make its way in an increasingly unfavourable international environment. Between 1980 and 1987 export earnings in nominal terms fell by 38 per cent in Tonga, 34 per cent in Vanuatu, 26 per cent in Western Samoa, 23 per cent in Papua New Guinea and 16 per cent in Saint Lucia. At the same time, the eighties for the IDCs have been marked by a steady decline in ODA disbursements.

102. Moreover, the limited credit-worthiness of small economies is in the case of the IDC further diminished by its vulnerability to natural disasters and other disabilities intrinsic to insularity. In particular it should be noted that, in view of negligible public sector savings, the major part of the income that is computed as GNP is generated directly or indirectly by concessional external assistance and is not sustainable without it. (There are also the effects in the case of the IDC of the disproportionately high level of remittances from migrants). Hence the denial of concessional assistance on the basis of income criteria.a step which could have a domino effect on the availability of all other sources of assistance - would sharply reduce per capita income.

103. In any event a high per capita income as presently computed is not an indicator that transformation to a more diversified and stable economic structure is being effected and should not therefore deflect international attention from the need for special measures to meet the specific vulnerabilities of IDCs.

II.9 Making the Case for Additional Assistance

104. In view of the so far inadequate international response to the problems of IDCs there is a clear need to reformulate the strategy for securing additional assistance. The following approach is recommended:

(i) the major objective should be to secure increases in the quantum of aid mainly through the provision of specific assistance to assist in coping with the disabilities peculiar to IDCs and in particular SIDCs;

(ii) in consequence national and regional programmes should clearly focus on such specific needs;

(iii) whether at the national or regional levels, programmes should be informed by an important element of collective self-reliance, an approach likely to attract the attention and support of donors;

(iv) both IDCs and Donor Countries and Agencies should accord an enhanced role to regional cooperation as in that context the problems of IDCs appear to be more susceptible to management and solution;

(v) in view of the emerging global awareness of environmental hazards and of the need for an international response to them, IDCs must ensure that the international community perceives that the impact of such problems on them is a question not only of sustainable development but of their very survival.

III. Demographic instability

105. In addition to the deeply-rooted tradition of out-migration (a matter discussed in another section of this study), the population of island developing countries is often characterized by demographic instability. Island populations have been observed to be subject to rapid increases or decreases which do not derive from the natural growth or population decline but which reflect sensitiveness to economic movements in the environment. Thus in the Caribbean booms in the Dutch Antilles Island of Aruba (the installation of oil refining) or in The Bahamas (tourism development) have led to rapid immigration from nearby island countries. Such swift population increases have posed great social problems for the host island countries (The Bahamas has a major problem coping with illegal migration from Haiti) and equally so for the home islands which, because of emigration, find themselves with a depleted population consisting of the young and aged.

106. In the atoll islands of the South Pacific it has been noted that small numerical changes in births or deaths can substantially alter the islands' population age and sex composition and growth trends. In such small countries even small migration movements may upset the demographic balance and precipitate situations of difficulty.[19]

107. The problem of rapid population growth is not normally considered in the context of SIDCs, yet the fact is that population growth statistics for 1980-87 period shows several SIDCs as having high average annual population growth rates.Comoros (3.1) Maldives (3), Sao Tome and Principe (2.7), Vanuatu (2.4), Kiribati (2), with all island developing countries averaging out at two per cent.

108. The implications of such rapid population growth have to be pondered in the context of the paradoxical situation that while island countries have on the whole small populations, most of them are densely populated. As the Panel of Experts had pointed out:

There are more than 100 inhabitants per square kilometre in more than half the islands for which data are available, and more than 500 inhabitants per square kilometre if only arable land is considered.[20]

109. Such population trends point to social instabilities in the making. Siwatibau has pointed out in relation to the Pacific Island Region that:

the average rates of economic growth in the 1980s for most Pacific Island countries were below the natural population growth. The income per head in each of these countries except Western Samoa and Tonga where the rates of migration were important was either static or has steadily declined.[21]

110. These population trends within small island countries operate as a major disability impeding a planned process of development.

111. This study now turns to the outline of proposals for national, regional and international measures which would contribute to reducing the vulnerability of island developing countries.

IV. NATIONAL MEASURES

112. The strategy for coping with the vulnerabilities which derive from insularity and smallness should be based on the enhanced economic management which might be secured through sound development planning. Such planning should aim at the highest flexibility. On the need for flexibility in development planning in small island countries, Demas has recommended with reference to the Eastern Caribbean that national plans and public sector investment programmes should be "rolling" plans and programmes where every year the plans and programmes are carried forward by one year. This permits flexibility and adequate response to changing circumstances (including those in the outside world as well as those resulting from local natural disasters) without abandoning a logically consistent and systematic framework for development.[34]

113. In view of the IDC's high sensitivity to the external environment, planning must respond rapidly to change and should therefore utilise the information technology available through the development of a computer capacity. A computer capacity will maximise the use of the knowledge and skills of the IDC's few expert personnel by making readily available to them new areas of information and innovation for policy formulation. The Plan, in keeping with the approach outlined above, should explicitly identify the measures for coping with the vulnerabilities peculiar to the IDC and should show their inter-relatedness to other projects and the diversion of effort and resources required for meeting them. In short, the Plan should project, as has not been done adequately before, the costs of insularity and the urgent need for specific assistance to meet the disabilities of insularity, compounded by smallness.

114. The list of measures will vary with each island country but in each case should include some of the following:

(i) Coping with Natural Disasters

(a) natural hazards assessment, and the building of mitigation measures into new investment projects paying particular attention to the effects of hurricanes and typhoons, etc. and sea level rise;

(b) diversification especially in crops to diminish vulnerability;

(c) the restoration, as far as possible and as a safety net, especially in the Pacific, of traditional techniques and agricultural systems which once provided a measure of security against natural disasters.

(ii) Coping with Disabilities which derive from the Physical Characteristics of IDCs

(a) coastal zone management;

(b) the redistribution of projects and benefits to counter tendencies to secession in outer islands;

(c) security arrangements to counter the risks incident to dispersion;

(d) projects to cope with the special disabilities of archipelagos including provision for the disproportionately high transport project component, induced internal migration, avoidance of polarisation, and the provision of infrastructure despite fragmentation;

(e) projects to cope with the special disabilities of atoll countries including the provision of water supply, diversification into new crops to broaden the resource base of subsistence agriculture and to provide possible export possibilities.

(iii) Coping with the Vulnerabilities of Location

(a) the provision of transport and communication facilities to overcome remoteness and dispersion;

(b) the development of linkage industries to enhance and broaden the benefits from tourism especially in food and craft production.

(iv) Coping with Resource Limitations

(a) projects for water management, and the provision of potable water through the installation of desalination plant and other mechanisms;

(b) reforestation;

(c) land management including the mutiple use of land for example in agro-forestry systems;

(d) development of new energy sources.solar, marine, hydro-thermal and the utilisation of industrial waste.

(v) Coping with Eco-System Vulnerability

Projects for the preservation of eco-systems including habitat conservation and restoration.

(vi) Coping with Migration

(a) arrangements for recruitment of skilled nationals resident overseas into the private and public sectors perhaps along the lines of the UNDP Tokten Scheme;

(b) measures to encourage the channelling of remittances into productive small scale enterprises.

(vii) Utilising the Exclusive Economic Zone

Projects which moving away from the present land-focussed approach to development (an approach shared both by IDCs and Donors) seek to integrate the marine resource into new development strategy, but with particular attention paid to enhancing the productivity of artisanal fishing. (Discussed in following section on regional cooperation).

Need for Effective Representation and Negotiation

115. In keeping with the approach outlined above, which envisages that the IDCs (with appropriate assistance) should themselves identify the assistance needs specific to the disabilities which derive from insularity and as compounded by smallness, it is considered imperative that IDCs should themselves and despite their very limited resources, embark on the wider and more effective representation of their own needs for special assistance at both international and bilateral levels. This is a task which they cannot leave to other countries and to international agencies.

116. It is of particular importance that IDCs should give early attention to the strengthening of their capacity for the representation of their interests as the agenda of major international concerns in the immediate future will offer several opportunities for advancing their interests. Particular attention should be given, for example, to the preparations for the convening of the second United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Similar attention should be given to the proposed negotiations of a Framework Convention on Climate.
(It is recommended that a study be made of the relevance of the several initiatives now being taken in this rapidly evolving field, for the overcoming of the disabilities of the IDCs).[35]

117. In the case of the establishment of overseas missions, there is the already apparently successful experiment of providing joint accommodation for the UN Missions of Commonwealth Pacific and the Eastern Caribbean States. Of equal importance as an experiment in representation are arrangements which a number of the OECS States have made for joint representation in London and Ottawa.

118. Such overseas missions as can be afforded by the IDC should be conceived of in functional terms. The staff should be trained not only in "traditional functions" but in the promotion of trade, investment and tourism and to be sensitive to and to collect information, including information on technology, which is relevant to the IDC problems.

119. The work of the missions should be maximized through the technique of multiple accreditation. Multiple accreditation could also be utilized regionally or indeed even further afield by accrediting senior home-based staff under so-called ambassador-at-large arrangements. Such accreditation involving occasional but previously well prepared visits can prove effective especially when supported by honorary consular arrangements. With similar careful advance preparation, special missions can yield equally useful results.

120. In view of the fact that only one or two overseas missions can be afforded, a method which could be utilized by the SIDC where there are strong traditional ties with a major country is for that country to be asked to represent the interest of the SIDC in a third receiving country as is provided for by Article 46 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Membership in International Organizations

121. Membership in International Organizations even at the rate of the minimal subventions to which SIDCs are entitled, can involve hardly affordable expenditure. It will therefore be necessary to determine which organizations hold out the best prospect in terms of advancing SIDC interests. Consideration should also be given to a shared approach to membership in which one SIDC concentrates on a particular international organization representing the regional interest and passing on relevant information and assessments, while another SIDC pursues membership in some other relevant International Organization.

122. Representation at meetings of international organisations or special conferences must rely on the skills of its senior staff from .home. department and ministries. In pursuit of this approach the island of Dominica has recently undertaken the intensive diplomatic training of a number of its senior staff in the techniques of overseas representation.

123. In the case of representation at meetings of international organizations or international conferences, the SIDC should explore the cost-effective method of attaching a representative to the delegation of a friendly country. There are circumstances in which such a representative could be entitled to vote separately. In this connection the SIDC should promote among friendly states the ratification of the 1975 Vienna Convention on the representation of States in their Relations with International Organizations of a Universal Character which, when it enters into force, will include a provision that "Two or more states may accredit the same person as Head of Mission to the same International Organization".

124. A further useful and cost-effective approach would be for SIDCs to ensure that their regional organizations such as the South Pacific Forum, the Indian Ocean Commission, the OECs and CARICOM be given observe status and access to international meetings.

Need for Skills in Negotiation

125. As the SIDC must rely on overseas participation in nearly every sector of development, whether it be joint investment in the EEZ or in the private sector, or in international fora, it needs to acquire techniques of negotiation over a broad field in order to maintain its specific interests. Methods have been developed for teaching negotiation techniques in intensive short courses using the case study method. SIDCs should seek access to such courses especially through their regional organizations.

V. REGIONAL MEASURES

126. Regional cooperation either through an integration movement or through a group of related institutions holds the key which opens the door to solution of the major problems posed by IDC vulnerabilities. While well-established regional movements and mechanisms exist for two of the main island groupings (CARICOM and the OECS in the Caribbean and the South Pacific Forum in the Pacific) these have not so far been accorded a central role in the security and development processes of their member IDCs.

127. In order that regional cooperation, however institutionalised, should be enabled to play a larger role there is need for change in the attitudes and policies of both IDCs and Donors. The IDC has tended to treat regional cooperation as at best a supplement to its own development efforts and as a poor second to traditional economic relationships. In keeping with this attitude and approach there has been a perceived tendency to regard international assistance provided for regional institutions and projects as a diversion from the quantum available for bilateral assistance. It is considered that the IDC should in future more deliberately build in to its national plan components which are perceived as being achievable on a cost effective basis only through regional cooperation.

128. Donor attitudes and policies whether at country or agency level have been in significant measure a mirror image of the approach of the IDC. At present the quantum of aid tends to be mainly concentrated in terms of distribution on bilateral programmes. While bilateral assistance should not be curtailed but expanded there should also be an expansion of assistance to the regional movements and institutions based on the perception that regional cooperation could provide essential elements in the development strategies of the IDCs.

129. In recognition of this larger role for regional cooperation Donors should increasingly entrust the delivery of assistance to regional institutions including the regional and sub-regional development banks. It is recognised that this will require the development banks to play a larger role in grant-giving than is usually the case.

130. Experience has shown that the main threat to regional cooperation arises from demands for the equitable distribution of such gains as accrue from regional action. These difficulties are frequently exacerbated by the sense of separateness generated by insularity. In the Pacific the two major regional states - Australia and New Zealand - have ensured through their assistance that the benefits which accrue from regional cooperation outweigh the losses, so that regionalism remains the preferred option. A similar donor approach is required in the case of other regional movements. Regionalism, it is recommended, should be informed by a pragmatic and experimental approach rather than by a focus on large generalised objectives. This study supports the recommendation of the 1974 Panel of Experts that in view of the scattered and open nature of such regional systems, and the small scale of many of the economies involved, we consider that there should be a strong emphasis on detailed inter-island problems and relations, and that global projections and plans for the system as a whole may be of less immediate relevance. Thus, it may be more important to identify a particular potential linkage between two island economies than to attempt to plot the future course of the region as a whole.[36]

Economic cooperation

131. There should be a similar approach to economic cooperation with emphasis on the promotion of specific investments or trade in particular products. The Caribbean experience has been that regional agreements based on projects of government to government cooperation are difficult to implement and that such "global" efforts at cooperation have yielded few results. The regional movement should in the area of economic cooperation aim to provide a supporting framework to facilitate private investment and initiative. Tonga's penetration of the Japanese market with a line of vegetables or the more recently reported Caribbean success in providing management distribution services for a leading US magazine are striking examples of the potential of private initiative.

132. Some of the other possible areas for enhanced regional cooperation are described briefly below:

Natural Disaster Preparedness

The range of natural disasters itself dictates the imperative need for a regional approach to disaster preparedness including in particular such matters as risk assessment, mitigation measures, relief and rehabilitation. There are already "partial" mechanisms in place in the two main island groupings. In the Pacific, a Disaster Relief Fund, established in 1976 provides modest assistance. The Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project (PCDPPP) established in 1980 provides technical support and coordinates disaster preparedness activities.

133. While both mechanisms are founded on the basis of mutual support among their respective member states, they require, if they are to be effective, assistance on a scale which has not so far been forthcoming. Assistance is required in such areas as training, the provision of equipment for monitoring and prediction, the establishment of communication networks, the promotion of public awareness, research into improved mitigation measures and funding for relief and reconstruction. More importantly a regional mechanism could meet the overarching need to establish schemes of disaster insurance; it could provide the basis for attracting reinsurance from an international fund.

Negotiation and Bargaining

134. As few IDCs possess the skilled personnel to negotiate effectively, regional cooperation provides a basis for strengthening bargaining power at both country and regional levels. The value of this approach has already been demonstrated by the results achieved by regional cooperation in the context of the LOME Conventions* negotiations.

135. It should likewise be possible to put together at the regional level, as required, specific task forces to assist individual IDCs in bargaining with multinationals and for the preservation of the country's interest in proposals for licensing or joint investment as for example in the area of fishing.

Integration of the Marine Resource into Development Strategy

136. The individual IDC has not the resource to undertake the volume of research and of planning necessary for the exploitation of the EEZ. Regional cooperation could provide a basis for undertaking resource surveys and for planning utilisation. This study agrees with the recommendation of Dolman that the exploitation of the EEZ (at least initially) should give greater emphasis to the replacement of expensive imports rather than to projects for earning foreign exchange. Thus a regional plan for marine development should aim at the replacement

(i) of massive imports of fish through the further development of artisanal fishing, and mari-culture including the cultivation of food fish and shrimp;

(ii) of imports of fuel by the development of alternative sources of energy including wave energy and Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) a technique now reportedly possible on a scale which puts it within the reach of the SIDC and which has the important additional advantage of producing at the same time large volumes of water fit for human consumption.[37]

Industrial Development

137. Regional cooperation could provide the basis for a strategy to lessen economic vulnerability which would not be implementable at the level of the individual IDC. The elements of this strategy could include

(i) the upgrading of export products, for example, the use of cane sugar, whose markets are under threat to produce sucro-chemicals;

(ii) providing through the regional market a base in which international price and quality competitiveness could first be achieved.

Exchange of information

138. A regional mechanism could promote the exchange of information about cost effective techniques which are being successfully utilised by an individual IDC to cope with vulnerability. Such exchanges could with great advantage be undertaken at both the intra-regional and inter-regional levels. (Development authorities in one South Pacific country for example, were anxious to learn of the successful bio-gas project at the farm level promoted by the Caribbean Development Bank).

Reversing the Brain Drain

139. A regional approach to the exchange and promotion of skilled staff between and among the IDCs might lead to the retention within the region of personnel who now seek to advance their prospects through migration. An inventory of skills within the region and in migrant communities could provide the basis for intra-regional and inter-regional schemes of technical assistance.

Preservation of Identity

140. In those island regions subject to heavy penetration by foreign electronic media or tourist related activities joint production and exchange of cultural and media material may help to maintain regional and country identities, thus safe-guarding the essential basis for self-reliance.

VI. INTERNATIONAL MEASURES

141. The proposals outlined above for national and regional measures should provide donor countries and agencies with a readily identifiable and practical basis for the provision of specific assistance.

142. There has already been significant recognition at the level of donor countries and agencies of the Intrinsic Disabilities of Island Developing Countries and hence of the need for specific assistance. Thus the Lome Conventions negotiated between the EEC and the ACP Group of Countries recognize the special disabilities of the ACP island states:

the provisions governing the use of STABEX (system of stabilization of export earnings from agricultural commodities) are more generous to island developing countries. For instance, the fluctuation threshold for island states is set at a lower percentage, i.e., 1.5 per cent instead of the normal 6 per cent for other countries. It is also provided that when the agreed transfer is greater than the available resources, the amount of the transfer should be reduced by a certain percentage. In the case of the island developing countries, this reduction is calculated only on the basis of part of the transfer in excess of 1 million ECUs.[38]

143. Two years ago the UNDP, in similar recognition, established the practice that:

in the calculation of Indicative Planning Figures (IPFs) for the fourth programming cycle (1987-1991), it is stipulated that under the heading of .supplementary criteria" a point should be awarded to each island developing country. This supplementary criterion recognizes the unique conditions confronting those countries, and a total of 50 island developing countries will benefit from this special criterion whose approximate aggregate value to the calculations of country IPFs for those countries is US$30 million for 1987-1991. [39]

144. In these ways there have already been established some aid mechanisms which take account of the intrinsic disabilities of the Island Developing Countries. In determining an increased quantum of assistance it is recommended that the usual per capita income criteria should be supplemented by criteria which respond to the peculiar vulnerabilities of IDCs and in particular SIDCs. While it is not possible within the compass of this study to indicate precisely the indices of vulnerability it is considered that they might include the following:

Economic vulnerabilities

(i) Openness (Exports & Imports as ratio of GNP)
(ii) Role of foreign and private capital inflows in capital formation
(iii) Percentage of public sector investment financed from external sources on grant basis
(iv) Food dependence
(v) Capacity to import
(vi) International credit worhtiness.

Social vulnerabilities

(i) High population density
(ii) Population dispersion as factor diminishing cohesion
(iii) Rate of migration of skilled personnel
(iv) Ethnic divisions deriving from historical factors

International Disaster Fund

145. It is recommended that in addition to expanded bilateral assistance the growing international concern with the intensification of natural hazards as a result of global warming should be concretely expressed in the creation of an International Fund which will provide disaster assistance. The creation of such a Fund, it is suggested, could be a principal objective of the international community in the 1990s which through the UNGA has designated the decade as the period during which under the auspices of the UN Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRO) international cooperation in the field of natural disasters reduction will be fostered.

146. A disaster fund might be financed voluntarily from both private and public sources. While the fund's utilisation could not be limited to IDC disasters, criteria which highlighted the effects of disasters on GDP should ensure that IDCs and in particular SIDCs would be among the principal beneficiaries. Such a fund could significantly advance the efforts to provide disaster insurance by becoming the instrument for providing or mobilising reinsurance. The proposal for such a fund was first made by the Panel of Experts who studied the problems of IDCs in 1974. Aware of the difficulties which its establishment would involve the panel recommended that a study be undertaken on the desirability and practicability of an international fund for meeting the economic cost of natural disasters, and that this study should pay special attention to the mode of financing such a fund, the definition of disasters which might be covered and the need to avoid systems that might encourage fecklessness on the part of Governments and private individuals.[40]

New Mechanisms

147. In view of the inter-disciplinary and closely inter-related problems of IDCs it is recommended that the approach to assistance within the UN system be strengthened by the establishment of two related mechanisms namely:

(i) as envisaged in the UNGA resolution 43/189 an Inter-Agency framework or Group to be established by the UN Secretary-General and which it is suggested might have as its Chairman an Eminent Person from an IDC;

(ii) a small Group of Experts. The Inter-Agency Group might be concerned in the first place with the development of projects for the utilisation of the marine resource in terms of the needs of IDCs.

148. It is recommended that a small group of experts on the problems of IDCs, say twelve in number, should be appointed by UNCTAD and entrusted with the following responsibilities:

(i) to propose tasks including areas of research to the Inter-Agency Group

(ii) to keep under review the evolution of aid flows to IDCs and to make recommendations thereon

(iii) to explore and secure assistance from new sources including assistance from philanthropic Foundations.

UNCTAD should provide the Secretariat for both mechanisms.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

149. The advanced industrial nations have long implicitly maintained that there is a right of access to global natural resources with which to sustain their policies of full employment, industrial development and technological leadership. More recently the international community has moved steadily towards acceptance of the idea that the global commons whether it be the sea-bed or Antarctica or outer space are the heritage of all mankind and should be so utilised including utilisation as sources of revenue for the benefit of the entire human community. On this latter development, Havelock Brewster has argued cogently that the emerging concept of a common heritage involves a counterpart namely the common responsibility to compensate for the hardships caused by the "disequilibria" of nature.[41]

150. IDCs and in particular SIDCs as countries with high levels of vulnerabilities are striking examples of nature's disequilibria. As such in terms of the growing sense of a planetary community these small so often fragmented countries should attract additional and specific assistance to help them to cope with the disabilities which derive in the main from their physical characteristics and are compounded by smallness.

151. The intrinsic disabilities to which IDCs and in particular SIDCs are subject would alone make their existence precarious. Now in addition they are besieged by a range of global problems, mainly not of their own making, which threatens their very survival. These countries are for the most part very small. The quantum of additional assistance required should therefore be manageable. Moreover, assistance in certain areas of vital interest to IDCs including the utilisation of the marine resource and the development of alternative energy sources, projects which are more easily implementable within the small compass of the IDC, should serve at the same time to advance development frontiers which are of value to the international community as a whole.

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Island economies are especially open and are peculiarly dependent on external finance not only for development but to keep the economy running. Their openness is not just a matter of the high ratio of exports to domestic product .... It runs much deeper than that: it is an aspect of the islanders' personality.
Most if not all of the population of many island countries is of immigrant origin: the forefathers of the present inhabitants came or were brought to the island specifically to serve an economy whose centre was elsewhere. The island was simply a place of business functionally located within the metropolitan economy. The island plantation economy is the paradigm, but there are other types of island business. Some islands, for instance, were settled as a service to shipping; some also were settled as a disservice to it--privateering or piracy being the source of livelihood.

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